

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 COME-00 EB-08
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-----126516 062310Z /70

O R 062200Z SEP 78
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9314
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS CZ

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 QUITO 6212

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, EC
SUBJECT: LIBERALS CLAIM US EMBASSY INTERFERENCE IN ELECTORAL
PROCESS

REF: QUITO 6185

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: LIBERAL PARTY LEADER PEDRO JOSE ARTETA
HAS ACCUSED THE EMBASSY OF INTERFERENCE IN THE ELECTORAL
PROCESS. A STRONG EMBASSY STATEMENT DENIED THAT CHARGE
AND DEFENDED USG STANCE IN FAVOR OF RETURN TO DEMOCRACY.
ARTETA HAS SINCE MADE RATHER LAME ATTEMPT TO DEFEND HIS
CHARGE. NOT SURPRISINGLY, OTHER POLITICIANS HAVE PICKED
UP THE THEME OF US INTERFERENCE AND DEMANDED INVESTIGATIONS.
END SUMMARY.

2. ONE ASPECT OF PEDRO JOSE ARTETA'S STRONG BLAST AT THE
ELECTORAL PROCESS ON SEPTEMBER 4 (REFTEL) WAS HIS CLAIM OF
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FOREIGN INTERVENTION, INCLUDING REFERENCE TO POLCOUNS
SUTTON BY NAME. ARTETA'S ENTIRE COMMENT ON THIS SUBJECT
WAS AS FOLLOWS: "WHY HAS THERE BEEN CUUPLED WITH THIS
SUI GENERIS PANORAMA AN IRRITATING FOREIGN INTERVENTION
WITH VARIOUS FORMS AND TAKING PLACE AT VARIOUS HOURS,
FROM A VERY EARLY BREAKFAST IN THE HOUSE OF ECONOMIST
MAURICIO DAVALOS, WHO SHARES OSVALDO HURTADO'S VIEWS,

WHICH HE SHARED WITH HIS "COMPANIONS" AND WITH THE POLITICAL ATTACHE OF THE US EMBASSY, MR. SUTTON; TO COCKTAILS AT NIGHT OFFERED BY LAWYERS FOR TRANSNATIONAL COMPANIES."

3. THE EMBASSY ISSUED THE FOLLOWING PRESS RELEASE (IN SPANISH) ON SEPTEMBER 5: "IN LIGHT OF THE PURPORTED INTERVENTION OF THE UNITED STATES IN ECUADOR, AND OF THE CLAIM THAT AN OFFICIAL OF THIS EMBASSY ATTENDED A BREAKFAST WITH A POLITICAL LEADER AS A PROOF OF THAT ASSERTION, THE EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, RESPECTFUL OF ECUADOREAN PUBLIC OPINION, COMMUNICATES THE FOLLOWING: THE EMBASSY OFFICIAL REFERRED TO HAS NEVER HAD THE PLEASURE OF SHARING BREAKFAST WITH THE NAMED ECUADOREAN POLITICIAN. "OFFICIALS OF THIS EMBASSY NATURALLY HAVE BEEN ABLE TO TALK WITH ECUADOREAN LEADERS, INCLUDING THE AUTHOR OF THESE CLAIMS, AND ALL SHOULD AGREE THAT ANY CONVERSATION THAT HAS AS AN OBJECT THE INTERCHANGE OF OPINIONS WITH REGARD TO BILATERAL OR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS CAN DO NOTHING MORE THAN BENEFIT OUR TWO COUNTRIES. WE HOPE THAT THE ATMOSPHERE WHICH PERMITS THIS COMMUNICATION BETWEEN US WILL NOT DISAPPEAR.

"AT THE SAME TIME, WE MUST EMPHASIZE THAT THE POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES IS CLEAR WITH REGARD TO THE DEFENSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY IN THE WORLD. FOR THIS REASON, THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES, LIKE ALL GOVERNMENTS AND PEOPLES OF THE HEMISPHERE, VIEWS WITH CONFIDENTIAL

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SATISFACTION THE SPIRIT OF A RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONAL FORMS OF GOVERNMENT THAT CAN BE OBSERVED IN VARIOUS LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES.

"THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT SUPPORTS IN AN UNRESTRICTED MANNER THE POLITICAL PROCESS OF RETURN TO DEMOCRACY, WITHOUT SIGNIFYING BY THIS PREFERENCE FOR ANY PARTICULAR CANDIDATE."

4. IN A LIVE TELEVISION INTERVIEW THE EVENING OF SEPTEMBER 5, ARTETA ATTEMPTED TO DEFEND HIS STATEMENT. HE DODGED A QUESTION AS TO WHETHER HE COULD PRODUCE PROOF OF THE PURPORTED BREAKFAST MEETING, SAYING HE TOOK THAT INFORMATION FROM A COLUMN BY NOTED POLITICAL SATIRISTS "LOS PICAPIEDRA" WHICH APPEARED IN QUITO'S EL TIEMPO SEVERAL WEEKS AGO. IN A GENERALLY INCOHERENT CONVERSATION ARTETA EVEN CARRIED HIS CHARGES FURTHER: CLAIMING THAT USG INDICATIONS THAT IT WOULD BE MORE SUPPORTIVE OF A DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT CONSTITUTE ATTEMPTS TO BUY THE SUPPORT OF A GIVEN GROUP OR GRUPS.

5. IN A DIFFERENT, TAPED, T.V. INTERVIEW ARTETA ALSO EXTENDED HIS ACCUSATION TO COVER THE AMBASSADOR. HE

SAID THAT HIS RECENT STATEMENTS THAT THE USG STRONGLY
SUPPORTS THE RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT
CONSTITUTE UNWARRANTED INTERFERENCE IN ECUADOR'S INTERNAL
AFFAIRS.

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6. ARTETA HAS BEEN JOINED BY OTHER PRO-HUERTA
POLITICIANS IN HIS CHARGES. AT AN EXTREMELY TUMULTOUS
AUGUST 5 SESSION OF THE SUPREME ELECTORAL TRIBUNAL,
RAUL CLEMENTE HUERTA'S PRIMARY SPOKESMAN BEFORE THE
TRIBUNAL ADDED TO ARTETA'S CHARGES. MANUEL ARAUJO
HIDALGO, WHO HAS A LONG HISTORY OF ANTI-AMERICANISM AND
HAS BEEN TIED IN THE PAST TO BOMBINGS AND OTHER TERRORIST
ACTS, CONDEMNED WHAT HE TERMED ARMERICAN INTERVENTION IN
THE ELECTORAL PROCESS. HE REPEATED ARTETA'S CHARGES
CONCERNING AMBASSADOR AND POLCOUNS AND DEMANDED A FULL
INVESTIGATION OF THESE CHARGES. THE RESULTING FUROR, DURING
WHICH A NUMBER OF SPEAKERS SUPPORTED ARAUJO'S DEMANDS AND
EVEN WENT SO FAR AS DEMANDING THAT AMBASSADOR AND POLCOUNS
BE DECLARED PERSONA NON GRATA, CAUSED SET PRESIDENT BAQUERO
DE LA CALLE TO SUSPEND THE MEETING AT 7:00 P.M., FOUR
HOURS EARLIER THAN ITS NORMAL CLOSING.

7. SEPTEMBER 6 PRESS GENERALLY PLAYED THE STORY STRAIGHT,
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PUBLISHING THE EMBASSY STATEMENT ALONG WITH REPORTS OF THE EVENTS AT THE SET. THE EXCEPTION WAS QUITO'S EL TIEMPO, WHICH ALL ALONG HAS GIVEN HEAVY, LURID ATTENTION TO THESE REPORTS AND WAS, OF COURSE, THE PAPER IN WHICH THE REPORT FIRST APPEARED. SEPT. 6 EL TIEMPO HEADLINES PURPORTED SOCIAL CHRISTIAN PARTY CONFIRMATION OF ARTETA'S CHARGES, APPARENTLY REFERRING TO A STATEMENT BY A SOCIAL CHRISTIAN SPOKESMAN AT THE SET THE PREVIOUS EVENING. SIXTO DURAN, OF COURSE, IS A SOCIAL CHRISTIAN AND THE PARTY HAS BEEN A STOLID, IF MINORITY, SUPPORTER OF SIXTO'S NATIONAL CONSTITUTIONALIST FRONT. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE SAME PAPER'S PICAPIEDRA COLUMN, WHICH STARTED ALL THE FUSS, CITED LOGICAL REASONS WHY EMBASSY IS INTERESTED IN MAINTAINING CONTACT WITH PROBABLY WINNERS OF ELECTION AND GENERALLY RIDICULED ARTETA'S POSTURING.

8. COMMENT: THIS IS ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THE BIG LIE APPARENTLY SUCCEEDING IN DISGUIISING THE TRUTH TO THE POINT WHERE THE LATTER IS LOST SIGHT OF. ARTETA CANNOT, OF COURSE, PROVIDE PROOF OF A MEETING THAT NEVER TOOK PLACE. NOR WOULD SUCH A BREAKFAST HAVE BEEN ANY DIFFERENT FROM THE MYRIAD POLITICAL CONTACTS THE EMBASSY MAKES. THESE FACTS ARE BURIED BY THE FUROR OVER "U.S. INTERVENTION," WHICH IS PROBABLY BEING CHARGED BECAUSE THE USG'S INTEREST IN THE COMPLETION OF THE PROCESS IS GORING THE OXES OF THOSE WHO WISH TO STOP IT OR HAVE IT CONTINUE WITHOUT ROLDOS.

9. THERE IS A STRONG LIKELIHOOD, HOWEVER, THAT ARTETA AND OTHERS MAY HAVE OVER-STEPPED THEMSELVES IN ATTEMPTING TO USE SUCH CHARGES TO DISCREDIT THE RETORNO PROCESS. THERE IS SUFFICIENT INTEREST IN GOOD BILATERAL RELATIONS
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WITH THE US, AND THOSE CIVILIANS INTERESTED IN PROMOTING THE RETORNO REALIZE THE USEFULNESS OF THE US IN THAT EFFORT, THAT THESE CHARGES MAY WELL PRODUCE A BACKLASH FROM SERIOUS POLITICIANS. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE TUMULT CREATED BY THIS OR ANY OTHER RED HERRINGS MAY PROVIDE JUSTIFICATION FOR THOSE WHO MIGHT BE CONSPIRING TO TERMINATE THE PROCESS.
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